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PLANS FOR BIRD REFUGES IN SPITE OF LOW FUNDS

Lack of Federal funds will not prevent the establishment of migratory-game-bird refuges, if an emergency plan inaugurated by the Bureau of Biological Survey succeeds. According to this plan, State game and conservation commissions, wild-life organizations, and others interested will provide many hundreds of small marsh and water areas suitable as resting, feeding, and breeding grounds for the birds.

Paul G. Redington, Chief of the bureau, has proposed this cooperative plan to tide over the period during which the refuge program authorized by the Federal migratory-bird conservation act of 1929 is slowed up for lack of funds. This Federal program included plans for a hundred or more proposed refuges of about 20,000 acres or more each. Altogether, however, the numerous small areas now proposed might well equal or exceed in acreage the total of the larger areas that were on the program for establishment in the next two or three years. By that time, says Mr. Redington, the major program doubtless can be resumed.

Among the non-governmental agencies invited by Mr. Redington to participate in this extensive conservation enterprise are the Izaak Walton League of America, the American Game Association, the National Association

of Audubon Societies, More Game Birds (Inc.), the National Grange, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the American Legion, and local organizations of sportsmen. Furthermore all other societies and individual farmers, sportsmen, naturalists, and others are invited to cooperate.

The plan proposed by the Biological Survey contemplates using such resources as are available. Instead of waiting until the Government can act, the men of the country are invited to roll up their sleeves and get down to individual work for the preservation of the game species now so seriously threatened. Such work, it is suggested, will restore many of the breeding and resting grounds that have been taken from the birds year after year with the advance of settlement and industry.

"The loss of water areas," said Mr. Redington, "from drainage and other causes will continue, and the decrease of water birds also will continue unless positive measures are taken to counteract the effects of the present unfavorable conditions." For this reason he proposes that many small units of the millions of acreage available be made suitable for the water birds and other wild fowl. "The total," he said, "includes many units ranging in size from an acre upward. These smaller units are ideally adapted for development and administration by local groups, and when so administered would supplement the system of large refuges established by Federal and State governments. The plan contemplated involves a common effort to reclaim and create the smaller types of marsh and water areas.

"In nearly all localities frequented by waterfowl," said Mr. Redington in his invitations, "there are areas of land adjacent to water that, with some small expenditure and effort in the building of dams, the diversion of water, or the improvement of food conditions and cover, would prove highly attractive to wild fowl. Among such areas are sloughs, beaver meadows, small marshes partially dry, shallow flats and other depressions, creek and brook valleys, and other similar places that may be flooded at small expense. For this purpose no slough or shallow pond is too small to be considered if it can be made useful and attractive to wild fowl. In many instances land that has been unprofitably drained can be re-flooded, and shallow ponds and marshes not now attractive to wild fowl can be made valuable by the introduction of food plants and sometimes by the eradication of carp.

"The success of the project depends ultimately upon the interest and energy displayed by local groups. It is sufficiently elastic to meet the financial limitations of the local associations. Each community must do its share, and the benefits to be derived will go far toward undoing the damage caused by drainage and the destruction of water areas for industrial and other purposes."

In the examination of areas recommended as suitable for acquisition under the Federal sanctuary project, Mr. Redington said that the Biological Survey has found that many were too small for economical Federal administration, though otherwise suitable for development as waterfowl refuges. The examination of these areas included in many cases a survey of food and water conditions, as well as the gathering of facts relating to topographical features, ownership status, and availability for acquisition by purchase or lease. "The Biological Survey," he said, "will undertake to supply advice and information to any agency or group desiring to develop any such units. In addition, though having no funds at its disposal to enable it to make financial contributions to the work, the Biological Survey

will furnish expert information concerning the development of suitable food supplies and proper water levels. It will give advice regarding the species of birds that the locality should endeavor to attract.

"The Biological Survey will also offer the services of qualified field representatives so far as financial and other conditions permit. It is hoped that with the development of the plan funds may be raised among the cooperating agencies for the employment of qualified leaders to supervise the work in the field. The plan offers a constructive project in which all interested agencies may cooperate without duplication of effort."

Mr. Redington suggests that the Izaak Walton League, the American Game Association, the National Association of Audubon Societies, and all other organizations and agencies having representatives in the field, may be of the greatest possible aid by employing their local agents to encourage and direct local operations. Organizations not having agents in the field, he said, may assist the project by the use of any available funds and by encouraging local interest in the plan.

It is the purpose to develop the plan immediately in the principal breeding areas in the northwestern United States. An effort will be made to concentrate the initial efforts in this zone, though no opportunities will be overlooked for the establishment of waterfowl areas in other parts of the United States. The Biological Survey considers this a vitally important region and feels that a successful demonstration of the plan there will not only be of immediate advantage to many migratory birds but will serve to encourage the extension of the plan to other regions.